

**Town of Woodstock
Selectboard Meeting
September 16th, 2025
6:00 PM
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes**

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Ray Bourgeois, Laura Powell, Greg Fullerton, Vice Chair Susan Ford, Keri Cole

Staff: Eric Duffy

Public: Butch Sutherland, Roger Logan, Alison Clarkson, Joe Major, Charlie Kimball, Becca White, Carol L. Wood, Greta Calabrese, Jess Kirby, Thalia Tringo, Michael Green, Holly Pierce, John Steinle, John Edick, Dmitriy Kim, Joe DiNatale, Michael Green, Jenevra Wetmore, Will Ladd, Timothy Maines, Delora Toews-Schneider

Call to order

1. Chair Ray Bourgeois called the Selectboard meeting of September 16th to order at 6:00 PM

A. Additions to & deletions from posted agenda

Liquor License – Positive Pizza LLC

B. Citizen's Comments

Butch Sutherland addressed the Board about reviving the discussion of a merger between the Town and Village. He explained that after speaking with Eric Duffy, he learned that petitions for a merger are non-binding. Instead of pursuing petitions, he requested that the two boards (Selectboard and Trustees) begin discussions about a potential merger.

Roger Logan supported Butch's comments and thanked him for his years of service to the community, emphasizing the importance of listening to his perspective.

Eric Duffy noted that there would be a joint meeting with the Trustees on Monday, September 29th, to discuss goals and objectives, where the merger topic would likely come up. He suggested this would be an appropriate time for citizens to attend and provide input.

C. Manager's Report

Eric Duffy reported on several items:

- The housing working group, led by Trena Troliver, had finished their work as the town transitioned to a new development director.
- Abbie Sherman started as the new Economic Development Director the previous week, coming from Killington and well-regarded throughout the state. She was being introduced gradually to Woodstock.

- Eric Duffy, Robert Desmore, and Abbie Sherman attended the New England GFOA Conference in Jay Peak. Abbie Sherman as president of the New England Chapter, organized the conference. Eric Duffy, Robert Densmore and Abbie Sherman received scholarships to attend, minimizing costs to taxpayers.
- Fall preparations were underway, with the Trustees working to get vendors on the Green for Fall Foliage and trash cans placed around Woodstock in anticipation of increased tourism.
- The financial report for the first few months of the fiscal year showed spending at about 15% of the budget with 20% of the year completed. The Town had billed out approximately \$29 million in taxes, with 72% of that going to the state for education taxes.
- The joint meeting will meet on September 29th at 5:30 PM would focus on reviewing last year's goals and objectives and setting new ones for the upcoming year. In response to a question about missing trash cans at the cemetery, Eric Duffy explained they were removed due to bears coming down and getting into food waste. This was a temporary solution to the problem.

D. Discussion

Woodstock's State Delegation

Representatives from Woodstock's State Delegation attended to provide updates on legislative activities:

Charlie Kimball (State Representative for Reading, Woodstock, and Plymouth) discussed the educational reform bill (H454/Act 73) passed in the last session:

- A school redistricting task force is meeting to recommend new district configurations
- State aid for school construction was included but without a dedicated funding source
- A new foundation formula for education funding is being developed
- A system to charge different tax rates for primary residences versus second homes is being set up
- Regional appraisal districts are being established
- The local options tax municipal share was increased from 70% to 75%

Senator Joe Major noted that the new school districts would be between 4,000-8,000 students, with municipalities no longer controlling school budgets. He acknowledged concerns about local control but emphasized the need to balance affordability with maintaining education standards.

Senator Becca White discussed transportation funding challenges:

- Federal funding is decreasing while maintenance costs increase
- Gas tax revenue is declining as vehicles become more fuel-efficient

- The state is facing difficult choices about transportation infrastructure funding

Senator Alison Clarkson discussed housing initiatives:

- The state continued work to reduce barriers to housing development
- The Community Housing Infrastructure Program was created to help towns build infrastructure for housing
- The Vermont Infrastructure Sustainability Fund was established within the Vermont Bond Bank
- The Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) has been successful in bringing vacant buildings back online at a cost of about \$38,000 per unit
- Future work will focus on aligning permitting and zoning, appeals reform, dedicated revenue for housing, and rebalancing landlord-tenant laws

Board members expressed concerns about high property taxes, especially for residents. The delegation acknowledged these concerns but noted that the recent education reform was intended to address these issues in the long term.

Appointment Interviews for Woodstock Committees

South Woodstock Design Review Committee Appointment

Carol Wood interviewed for the South Woodstock Design Review Committee position. She explained her interest in antique architecture and her experience owning and selling historic homes. When asked about balancing aesthetics with development needs, she emphasized the importance of keeping an open mind and working together to find solutions that maintain the integrity of historic structures while accommodating modern needs.

Woodstock's Marketing Committee

Several candidates interviewed for positions on the Marketing Committee:

Greta Calabrese explained she had been serving on the committee for the past couple of years as a representative from the EDC and as co-chair of the Marketing Committee. She highlighted her involvement in getting a new Marketing Coordinator and reducing costs while maintaining good outcomes.

Jennifer Schmidtke stated she works at the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce and was previously contracted by the town for marketing. She noted her experience writing about the town and community events.

John Steinle described his background in resort management and advertising, including work for Laurence Rockefeller's resort company and experience in the New York City advertising business. He emphasized the importance of gathering information from various constituencies before developing marketing messages.

Roger Logan suggested the committee should be renamed the "Marketing Communications Committee" to reflect a broader scope. He advocated for expanding the

website to include more local information beyond tourism, highlighting regional attractions, and hiring a consultant to understand how AI search engines will affect website traffic.

Holly Pierce expressed interest in strengthening community bonds through the committee, noting that there are many resources and great people in town but a disconnect exists. She emphasized the importance of bringing organizations together and improving communication about community events.

John Edick shared his experience working with the Chamber of Commerce and Discovery Newport Visitors Bureau in Newport, Rhode Island. He emphasized marketing the whole community, not just tourism, and the importance of listening to community members to understand their needs.

Joe Dinatale stated he had lived in Woodstock since 1990 and wanted to help refocus marketing efforts on work that actually delivers results. He felt previous marketing efforts had missed essential truths and opportunities.

Dmitriy Kim described his background in photography, videography, and social media. As a marketing coordinator at Twin Farms and a Woodstock resident for nearly two years, he expressed interest in helping the town grow sustainably.

Thalia Trigo mentioned she is a second homeowner who purchased a house in Woodstock in 2018 with plans to eventually retire there. She also bought the old pharmacy building and has experience with strategic marketing on limited budgets.

Woodstock's Investment Advisory Committee

Michael Green explained he was interested in filling the vacancy left by Jill Davies on the Investment Advisory Committee. He attended the committee's annual meeting over the summer and offered to help steer some of the annual procedures.

Support for Riverside Mobile Home Park Flood Mitigation Planning Study Discussion

Jenevra Wetmore, Executive Director at Sustainable Woodstock, presented information about the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) opportunity available as a result of the 2023 flooding. The application, due by the end of September, focuses on housing and recovery efforts for the Riverside Mobile Home Park.

Jenevra Wetmore requested:

1. A letter of support from the Selectboard
2. A resolution granting authority to the Town Administrator to act as the municipal authorizing official
3. Feedback on the level of municipal support for the project

She explained that the grant (approximately \$210,000) would fund an in-depth 2D study of the site and surrounding areas to better understand the river channel and determine what actions could make residents safer. This would likely involve floodplain restoration. The study would also examine potential parcels for relocating up to 12 homes if necessary.

Jenevra Wetmore noted that community outreach had already begun, including a public meeting at the park on August 11th where 21 of 22 survey respondents supported applying for the grant. A public meeting was scheduled for September 24th from 4:00-5:00 PM at Town Hall to gather additional public input.

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve the CDBG-DR grant and issue a letter of support and other documents to support the grant (7:55PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Liquor License

Motion: by Susan Ford to approve liquor licenses for Imprint 1022 VT 1st and 3rd, Ottauquechee Yacht Club 1st, 3rd, OCP and Positive Pizza Inc. 1st and 3rd- conditioned on the understanding that the state is reviewing these applications as the town is no longer given the information to do so. (7:56PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Request for extension to ADU Workforce Rental Program at 569 Lincoln St.

The board discussed a request to extend the ADU grant deadline for a project at 569 Lincoln Street. The grant had already been extended once, and the applicant was requesting a final extension through the end of October to complete the ADU and rent it. If not completed by the deadline, the applicant would not receive the final part of the grant and would have to repay the Town for the first installment of the ADU grant.

Motion: by Susan Ford to extend the ADU Workforce Rental Program deadline to October 31, 2025, on the condition that if the project is not completed by then, the applicant will not receive further funds and must repay funds already received. (7:57PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Water Abatement policy

The board reviewed a water abatement policy that mirrored the existing sewer abatement policy.

Motion: by Laura Powell to approve the water abatement policy to mirror the sewer abatement policy. (8:00PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Sewer Abatement

William Ladd - 33 Central Street

Will Ladd explained that he and his sister Eliza, owners of 33 Central Street, had been charged interest and penalties of over \$500 because the Town continued to use an

incorrect address despite being provided with the correct one multiple times. He requested abatement of the interest and fees totaling \$506.56 due to manifest error by the town.

Motion: by Susan Ford to abate the penalty and interest based on the guideline that if it's a manifest error of the Town, it can be abated. (8:02 PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Todd Ulman – 2706 East Woodstock Road

The board reviewed an email chain regarding this abatement request but found it difficult to understand the situation. The issue appeared to involve an address change and a bill from 2023.

Motion: by Susan to table the request and seek a better explanation. (8:05 PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Timothy Maines & Delora Toews-Schneider - 25 High Street

Timothy Maines explained that in February 2023, a pipe burst at his property, releasing approximately 23,824 gallons of water into the basement. Since this water did not go into the sewer system, he requested removal of penalties and interest, and to pay based on historic usage rather than the full amount billed (over \$4,000 compared to a typical bill of about \$642).

Motion: by Ray Bourgeois to reduce the sewer bill to \$642 (based on historical usage) and have the water bill also based on historical usage, to be worked out with Robert Densmore. (8:11PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

July 4th Fireworks Contract

The Board discussed the status of the fireworks committee and volunteers. Eric Duffy reported that one person who had initially agreed to lead the committee recently expressed concerns about having enough time. A meeting was scheduled for that week to gather interested volunteers and discuss next steps.

The board noted that the fireworks would be on Sunday, July 5th, as July 4th was already booked. They decided to wait for an update from the meeting before making a decision on the contract, noting that canceling the contract more than 30 days before the display date would incur a 10% fee (\$1,800).

The item was tabled pending feedback from the volunteer committee meeting.

Selectboard Procedures/Polices

The Board briefly discussed the Agenda Timeline Policy, with Eric Duffy noting the importance of board members supporting the policy when people approach them to add items to the agenda. They agreed to review the policy and discuss changes at the next meeting.

Marketing Job Description

Jess Kirby, the marketing coordinator, provided an overview of her role, which had expanded beyond the original description of digital marketing to include building a new website, creating policies for managing digital platforms, improving event management and communications, and exploring fundraising opportunities.

She mentioned challenges such as the lack of a town-wide global events calendar and the need for better coordination with event organizers. She also discussed the new website. The board provided feedback and discussed the scope of her role moving forward.

Vondell Cobb - VLT update and potential private donations

Susan Ford updated the board on discussions with Vermont Land Trust (VLT) regarding conservation of the Vondell Cobb property. The Town had identified 23 acres, two parcels, near Grassy Lane and 10 acres by the parking area that would be exempted from any conservation easement.

The two parcels by Grassy Lane created a lot of discussion. The proposed grants from the Vermont Land Trust are approximately \$200,000 with the all the exemptions, and the newest grant is ~\$550,000 if we include the two northern exclusions, the 10 and 13 acres by Grassy Lane, and include the 10 acre exclusion. But with an easement allowing that we could develop that for affordable housing. The board discussed setting a fundraising target for a private individual interested in raising money to conserve the property. They agreed to seek public input before making a decision, noting that the Conservation Easement would be permanent and that they needed to balance immediate financial benefits against long-term control of the land.

E. Potential Executive Session 1 V.S.A 313

Motion: by Laura Powell to go into an Executive Session 1 V.S.A to discuss the appointment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, with the understanding that final decisions would be made in open session.

(8:40 PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Laura Powell to exit executive Session (9:38PM)

Seconded: by Susan Ford

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Committee Appointment

Motion: by Laura Powell to appoint Carol L. Wood to the South Woodstock Design Review Committee. (9:39PM)

Seconded: by Ray Bourgeois

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Susan Ford to appoint Michael Green to the Investment Advisory Committee. (9:39PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Motion: by Susan Ford to appoint Greta Calabrese, Roger Logan, John Steinle, and Dmitri Kim to the Marketing Committee. (9:39PM)

Seconded: by Laura Powell

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

F. Other Business

G. Approval of Minutes

Minutes are Tabled

H. Adjournment

Motion: by Laura Powell to adjourn the meeting at (9:39PM)

Seconded: by Greg Fullerton

Vote: 5-0-0, passed

Respectfully submitted,

Kitty Mears Koar